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A
SHORT REVIEW
OF THE
POLITICAL STATE
OF
GREAT-BRITAIN,

AT THE
Commencement of the Year One Thousand
Seven Hundred and Eighty-Seven.

—“ *Nec Amore quisquam, et sine
Odio dicendus est.*” —

FOURTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. DEBRETT, OPPOSITE
BURLINGTON-HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

M,DCC,LXXXVII.

Al. 1771. Wg.

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At the Commencement of the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-Seven.

AN intelligent and reflecting mind, accustom'd to speculate upon human events, to regard their causes, their progression, and their effects, and to form its general opinions from an expanded survey of the whole; such a mind will naturally stop at particular æras in the history of nations, and assemble

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their scattered rays into one concenter'd point of view. The political situation of this country at the present juncture, may, perhaps, be regarded as forming one of those epochas; and may merit consideration, as detach'd from the general mass of time and matter, which constitute and compose what we denominate history. My object, in writing the following sheets, is principally to present a picture of the actual and existing moment, without either taking any ample retrospect of past transactions, or extending my conjectures far into an unascertain'd and imaginary futurity. It is certainly curious, and it may be useful, to consider the relative and respective positions of the King and the People, of the Governors and the Governed, of the Ministry and of the Opposition, at the opening of a new year, before the incumbent pressure of succeeding events has diverted
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our attention to other scenes and objects. I shall confine my survey to a few of the great component features; and shall begin, where, upon every principle, it is natural first to turn our eyes, with the consideration of the Sovereign.

It has fallen to the lot of few Princes, of whom history has preserv'd any authentic records, to enjoy so considerable a portion of the personal attachment, respect, and adherence of their subjects, after the unprecedented disgraces and calamities of his reign, as George the Third appears to possess at the present moment. The loss of thirteen colonies, of both the Floridas, of part of our West India Islands, and of Minorca—The surrender of whole armies—the ignominious flight of English fleets before those of France and Spain—the expenditure of a hundred and thirty millions of

pounds—the abyfs of ruin into which a long train of unfortunate councils has plunged the empire—the accumulation of taxes, under which every order of the community is opprefs'd and overwhelmed—and the degree of political insignificance, into which a country is fallen, who once difpenfed her largeffes and her fubfides to half the Princes of Europe.—Thefe misfortunes, multiplied, and almoft unparallelled as they are, yet have not deprived his Majefty of the affections of his people. His popularity, which during the firft years of his reign, and in all the funfhine of youth, and internal profperity, and external fuccefs, could not fustain itfelf againft an obfcure periodical paper, written by a private gentleman; has yet, to the admiration of mankind, furviv'd this mighty wreck, and, even renew'd itfelf amidft the convulfions and decline of the Britifh empire.

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Many circumstances, curious to investigate, have conduced and combined to produce this extraordinary event. Had George the Third, like Charles the Second, or William the Third, remained childless on the throne; and had her Majesty, like Catherine, or Mary, been only the partner of a barren bed; it is to be apprehended, that during the rage of faction, and the disgraces of a civil and a foreign war, with which England was shaken for so many years, the diadem, rudely assail'd, might perhaps have been torn from the royal brow. At that awful and memorable æra, when, in June, 1780, London blazed through all her streets; when, in the sublime language of Tacitus, “ *Urbs, incendiis vastata, con-*
“ *sumptis antiquissimis delubris, ipso capi-*
“ *tolio civium manibus incenso—*Odio
“ *et terrore corrupti in dominos servi,*
“ *in patronos, liberti.*”—When the

empire,

empire, convuls'd and agonizing, seemed to await her final doom from the parricide hands of her own children, the monarch might have been involved in the general ruin. But the numerous family of the Sovereign; his private virtues, and domestic character, drew a veil, even in the opinion of his enemies, across the errors of his Government and Administration. The father, and the husband, protected and sheltered the Prince; born in happier times, and in a milder age, than his unhappy predecessor, Charles the First, whom similar virtues and qualities could not secure from the scaffold and block! To this primary and fundamental basis of his popularity, are added several inferior and necessary supports. The character, and the conduct of his eldest son, the Prince of Wales: To the first of which the nation does not look with sanguine hope or exultation;

exultation ; and to the latter of which, it has expressed it's mark'd disapprobation in many instances, have unquestionably conduced to interest the English people in favour of their Sovereign.

The formation, and existence of that political monster, “ the Coalition,” at whose fatal birth were offered up as victims every appearance of public virtue or principle, and whose wild career soon plunged its authors into ruin, may likewise be regarded as another auxiliary support to the personal popularity of the Monarch. The recollection of that vigorous, but injudicious and arbitrary measure, which closed the short reign of “ The Coalition,” has operated, and will yet long continue to operate on the minds of every class of men ; from those who surround the throne, to those who are most remote from it's influence

influence or it's benefits. The rapacious invasion and seizure of private property, so repugnant to the genius of the English Government, and which form'd the leading feature of that projected act of state, spread a terroure through the island, which three years have not yet obliterated ; and which all the efforts of genius, employed in its defence, have never yet been able to justify, or reconcile to the far greater part of the nation.

An adventitious and recent event, deriving it's principal force and effect, rather from it's name, than its actual existence ; yet, by alarming the minds of every class of people for the safety of the Sovereign, has added new solidity to his throne, and diffus'd an unexampled popularity around his person. I need not say that I allude to the attempt, if, indeed, that which

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rather existed in intention, than in act, can be properly denominated an attempt upon the life of his Majesty. No circumstances of fanaticism, rebellion, or atrocity accompanied this act, or gave it birth. It neither resembled the attempts made against Elizabeth, or against William the Third. Insanity alone arm'd the hand of a wretched, female maniac, who was disarm'd and seized with the utmost facility, as soon as her design began to manifest itself. The nation did not, however, measure its exultation, or mark its general joy, by any exact proportion to the actual danger, from which their Sovereign had escap'd. Henry the Fourth, who was born for the delight of the human race, had he escap'd from the dagger of Ravallac, could not have receiv'd more universal, more flattering, or more cordial testimonies of the attachment of his people, than were laid at the feet of George

the Third in eager profusion.—Addreffes are not, indeed, always to be regarded as the indisputable tests of the real sentiments or adherence of the English people ; nor have any of our most beloved Princes received more numerous, or more adulatory ones, than did James the Second and Richard Cromwell. Ufurpers, Ideots, and Tyrants, have been fucceffively complimented with almost the fame professions of duty and affection. But, in this instance, the general joy naturally arising in every loyal breast, from a consciousness of the danger with which their Sovereign had been menac'd, and from which, he had escap'd, was perhaps augmented in its effect, by an obvious and unavoidable reflection on the character of the Prince, who must have succeeded to the vacant throne.

This consideration obliterated at once the recollection of the faded glories of the
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English name ; the remembrance of that unhappy war which emancipated America, restor'd the prostrate genius of France, and render'd back to Spain the proudest trophies of more triumphant reigns ! All these calamities were buried in the sentiments and expressions of exultation and pleasure, resulting from the recent escape of the King from the knife of an assassin.

To so extraordinary, and improbable a point of popularity has George the Third been elevated, by a combination of circumstances, after a reign of six and twenty years ; the first portion of which contains no event worthy the commemoration of history, except a peace, unquestionably inferior to the just expectations of a victorious nation : but, the latter part of which saw the altar of victory thrown down, and the Imperial Eagle, which had

soar'd so high, trampled in the dust, insulted, and expiring!—A reign, already longer in its duration, than any, except that of George the Second, since the death of Elizabeth, has rendered the character of the King intimately known to every order of his subjects: And altho' history will not rank him among those few chosen and immortal spirits, raised up by Providence in her bounty, for the felicity and admiration of mankind; yet will she, when faction and party are extinct, consign him no mean, or unworthy place in the temple of departed monarchs. If he shall not be plac'd with Trajan, and Antoninus, and Aurelius, yet shall he “soar above the limits of a vulgar fate.” He has not, like Louis the Fourteenth, wasted the blood of his people in ostentatious and wanton invasions of the dominions of Princes allied to him by descent, or connected with
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with him by treaties. His wars, however inglorious, or destructive in their progress, originated in principles, which even rebellion must respect, altho' she may oppose. Fortitude, equanimity, lenity, benignity : All the virtues, which adorn the humble walks of private life are to be traced in the palace of George the Third, and have accompanied him thro' every period of his reign. If he has not rivall'd the Medecis in the protection of the arts and sciences, he has at least extended to them a degree of patronage and of attention, which has neither been characteristic of, nor hereditary in the House of Hanover, since their accession to the throne of England. His continence, the decorum of his manners, and his conjugal virtues, have even in an age like this, produced an effect proportionable to their intrinsic merit ; and have held him up to the public eye in a
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point of view, to which no heart of feeling, or mind of reflection, can ever be insensible. Adorn'd with these amiable qualities, and aided by the concomitance of circumstances which I have endeavour'd faithfully to delineate, we shall not perhaps wonder at the advantageous position, in which his Majesty appears to his people, and to all Europe, at the close of 1786.

A speculative mind, habituated to range with freedom, and to meditate without restraint on the events of life, will perhaps find as ample subject for admiration and astonishment, in the present unpopularity of the Heir to the British Monarchy, as it may have done in the popularity of the Sovereign himself. A Prince of Wales is plac'd by Nature and by fortune on so high and so favour'd an eminence above mankind —

mankind—All his actions, and his very excesses, are beheld thro' so deceptive, or so favourable a medium—He is environ'd by such a splendor, resulting from youth, and royal dignity, and expectation of future virtues; that it requires no small deviation from all that can excite attachment, or lay claim to esteem, in order to divest himself, if not of the approbation, at least of the personal adherence of the far greater part of those, over whom he is one day, probably destin'd to reign. The errors of the father, only illuminate, and endear the son; who, as not being implicated in the disgraces, or involv'd in the misconduct of government, is ever by the erring multitude, regarded as the sure pledge of future times of tranquility and happiness.

Decorated, as the Prince of Wales peculiarly is, with all the graces of personal elegance,

gance, improv'd by education, cultivated by letters, enlarg'd by an acquaintance with men, not often attain'd by persons, so far removed from the walks of private and common life.—Endow'd even with powers of pleasing, and capacities of a convivial and a social kind, not inferior to those so much admired in Charles the Second.—Affable even to familiarity, addicted to the enjoyment of the table, and certainly not insensible to the charms of beauty, and the seductions which accompany it.—How, may it be asked, can a youth, to whom Nature has been thus liberal, and on whom every eye is naturally turn'd with predilection and partiality, have contriv'd, before he has yet fully attain'd to manhood, to shake the affections, and to diminish, if not forfeit the respect, almost inseparable from his person and his dignity ? It is an invidious, but it may be
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to future times, a useful task, to explain *how* a Prince of Wales *may* degrade himself in the eyes of a discerning, a loyal, but an impartial people.

He may lay the foundation of this melancholy proof of his power, by a departure from that sacred and primeval law, written by the finger of Nature deep in the human heart, of filial piety and obedience; a duty, as inviolable, and as much exacted from the Prince to the Sovereign, as from the last and lowest subject to his parent; a virtue, ever found to exist with most force and energy in those bosoms, where Nature has implanted all the most benign and kindly affections!—He may accomplish it by forming his nearest connections of familiarity and intimacy, not from among the youth who naturally surround the successor to the Throne; but

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from the most obscure and unprincipled individuals, with which a capital, such as this is, must of necessity teem. He may give the final wound to his popularity, and to the fond partiality of a great people, by forming a *connection* of so ambiguous, so enigmatical, and so undefin'd a nature, that mankind, with anxious, but fearful eyes, shall tremble to explore, what yet they desire to ascertain : And if this extraordinary and nameless *Union* should be form'd with a person, of a religious persuasion different from that of the country in which so strange a scene is acted ; it is only to contempt and ridicule that he can fly, to avoid general disapprobation and resentment. These, and I had almost said, *only* these, are the means by which a Prince of Wales can descend from the proud eminence on which he is plac'd ; by which he can compel a reluctant people to deprecate

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cate his reign, and to anticipate with terror that event, to which they are usually too prone to look with warm and pleasing expectation.

I shall be told, perhaps, that Henry the Fifth, so dear to every lover of Glory, or of his country, emerg'd from a similar cloud, which shaded and obscur'd him, before he ascended the Throne of England. But, where is the pretended familiarity between the Conqueror of Agincourt, and the son of George the Third? Can the excesses of intemperance, or levity, probably exaggerated to us by that magic pen which Shakspeare held, or however accurately true they may even be supposed, form any real resemblance between the two Princes? It is like the familiarity which Burnet has ingeniously discover'd between Charles the Se-

cond and Tiberius, *only* consisting in their common attachment to the pleasures of women.—May that resemblance, so dear and so precious, be discover'd in future years; and may the reign of George the Fourth, if it ever shall take place, equal in lustre, but exceed in duration that of Henry the Fifth! It is not yet too late to regain the esteem, and recover the affections of a generous people, ever prone to pity and to pardon the errors, which do not proceed from depravity of heart, or defect of principle. Time will insensibly draw a veil across his past irregularities, and consign them to perpetual oblivion. Let him express towards his Father and his Sovereign, a decent and a filial reverence, however he may retain his private opinion on matters of policy! Let him prove to a nation, deserving of his confidence, and anxious to find him worthy their's, that he is incapable

pable of entering into any engagement, from the possible eventual consequences of which, their happiness or tranquility may ever be endanger'd ! Let him rise above the little policy, to which former Princes of Wales may, in other times, (and when from peculiarity of circumstances such a policy might perhaps be venial,) have condescended ;—that of dividing the court and the country, and establishing the rival factions of the father and the son !—Then shall he be indeed the idol of an admiring people ; and imagination shall fondly see revive in the eighteenth century, on a Brunswic brow, the unfading laurels with which the temples of Plantagenet are for ever adorned !

Among the political phænomena of the present century, and certainly as the most prominent feature which characterises the close of the year 1786, may be consider'd
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the possession of the first executive office in this complicated government, quietly retain'd by a youth, who has already held the situation above three years.— Perhaps, no time has ever yet beheld so singular and unexampled a circumstance. Favourites have, indeed, in every age, with unexperienced hand, presumed to guide the vessel of state, elate with the insolence of youth, and intoxicated with the Royal favour. Their temerity, and their incapacity have usually, too, carried with them their own punishment, and soon conducted the pageant to ignominy, and frequently to death. But in a nation, and in a government regulated as this is, where favouritism is either unknown, or at least restricted within narrower limits than in more despotic countries, the road to political elevation is widely different. The beams of Royal favour, though they
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may gild and illuminate, yet do not dispense in this temperate region, that fostering warmth which can supply every inherent deficiency, and impart every endowment requisite for the government of mankind. Genius and talents, however sublime and capacious, sustained by industry, and fortified by application, can alone conduct to, and sustain in so giddy an eminence. In addition to these requisites, Mr. Pitt was aided by the lustre of hereditary fame, and of his father's services. Above all, he was indebted to a peculiar combination of circumstances, which, perhaps more than all his virtues or endowments, elevated him to the premature possession of the highest employment of the State. It must, however, be confess'd even by his enemies, that he has not been found unworthy of so rapid and extraordinary a promotion to the sum-

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mit of power ; and that he has betray'd little, if any, of the fire and promptitude on one hand, or of the intemperance and inexperience on the other, usually characteristic of youth.

Awkward and ungraceful in his person, cold and distant in his manners, reserv'd and sometimes stately in his deportment ; Mr. Pitt is not form'd to captivate mankind by the graces of external figure or address. Distinguish'd by no uncommon sensibility to the attractions of women, it is not from that sex he can expect the enthusiastic support, and more than masculine exertions, which his great political antagonist has repeatedly experienc'd on the most trying occasions. Little attach'd to amusement or dissipation, whatever form it may assume ; and even, when he unbends to convivial festivity or relaxation,

laxation, confin'd and private in its indulgence; his hours are dedicated to an almost unremitted application to the functions of his office. Parsimonious of the public revenue, and tenacious of the exhausted finances of a Treasury drained by preceding profusion, his conduct, as Minister, forms a striking contrast to the facility and prodigality of former administrations. Disinterested in his distribution of offices, and select in his choice of those on whom he confers employments, the nation has not regarded his abilities with more admiration, than it has conferr'd applause and veneration on his principles. Endow'd with talents unexampled for swaying a popular assembly: perspicuous and clear amidst all the energy and fire of oratory; ample, yet not prolix or diffuse: except from repetition, yet leaving no part of his

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subject

subject untouch'd, or unexplain'd. Animated in debate, though cold and severe in conversation; copious in his diction, and select in every figure or expression with which he chuses to enrich or adorn his speech; addressing himself as much to the judgment, as to the imagination; and gaining, by the mingled force of language and of conviction, a ready entrance to the heart: Such is the present Minister of the English people, and such is the impartial portrait of his virtues, and his defects!

Perhaps, a less rigid and unbending character: Perhaps a less sparing and economical superintendance in some circumstances, of the public treasure; however meritorious in itself: Perhaps a greater degree of attention to the individuals, upon whom rests the foundation of his
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own greatness; and a portion of that venality, (however the term may startle and affright) which in this democratical government, as in that of Rome, is unfortunately too necessary to enable a great and good Minister to retain a station of public utility——Perhaps, I say, a mixture of these ingredients, like poisons in physic, might produce the most salutary and beneficial effects. We are not in the age of the Scipios, or even, I fear, of Cato. The Roman empire was not worthy of a Pertinax, though it submitted to a Severus; and the Prætorian guards, accustomed to sell the Imperial dignity, knew no longer how to confer it as a voluntary donation on superior virtue. The Minister who will maintain his situation in this country, must condescend, however reluctantly, to adopt the arts of Government; arts, become indispensable;

and alike practised by a Clarendon, or an Oxford; by Walpole, and by North!

When I have thus finish'd the portrait of the Minister, I may be said in it to have comprehended almost the whole administration. Mr. Pitt, "with Atlantean shoulders," supports the incumbent weight of the monarchy, and stands, like Ajax, single and alone, amid hosts of surrounding enemies. One, and one only friend, appears, decorated with the insignia of legal dignity, to oppose in another House, the attacks of Opposition. Wherever else I look, I see only a vast vacuity; a vacuity, where no talents, no powers of oratory, no strength of intellect illuminate the darkness, or cheer the gloom! The names of a Sydney, and a Carmarthen, can only be transmitted to future times, by being involved in the illustrious train of Pitt, and
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must be preserved from oblivion by mixing in his radiance. They may “ pursue the
 “ the triumph, and partake the gale;”
 but never can mingle in the splendor of the renown: too happy, if their want of ability screen them from investigation: A Jenkinson, and a Dundas, may indeed supply the defects of the Cabinet, in either House of Parliament: But, England was not accustom’d in better times, to see the foreign interests of her Crown thus abandoned and thus neglected, in every Court of Europe, and every quarter of the globe.

It is not sufficient for men, who assume and undertake to conduct the affairs of nations, that they possess probity and good intentions. Talents and application must mark them out from among the croud of nobility who surround the throne, and entitle them to occupy the dangerous
 eminences

eminences of state: Nor when these are wanting, can any adventitious decorations of rank, or illustrious birth, be admitted as a compensation for such inherent and incurable defects.

Yet, under these manifest vices of the Administration, and incompetent as it must perhaps be consider'd to propel the languid wheels of Government in many of its most essential operations;—Sustain'd, as it appears to be, by the gigantic and single talents of one individual, still in early youth: Dependant not only on his life, but on the life of others, by whose demise he could no longer be in a situation to preside in the House of Commons, where his loss, or absence would be completely irreparable. Thus precarious, and thus defective as it must be allow'd, yet it's duration appears
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to have no visible, or even probable limits. It rests on the two great and substantial foundations, of the unquestionable favour of the Crown, and the equally undisputed opinions of the people. Perhaps, I might add without severity, that it is propp'd and sustain'd by a third circumstance; the disinclination of the greater part of the inhabitants of Great-Britain, to the component members of the last Administration: and an opinion generally diffus'd, (whether true or false, I shall not stop to examine,) that there is in that great party, more splendor of talents, than rectitude of intention, or principles of political virtue.

Having thus wander'd thro' the fertile fields of Ministerial plenty, where alone are to be found the golden apples of the Hesperides, it is time that we turn our eye upon the barren waste of Opposition.

Here

Here chilling poverty appears in all it's terrors.

“ No streams, as amber smooth, as amber clear,
 “ Are seen to flow, or heard to warble here.”

Yet, ungrateful and sterile as the soil may seem, it is fertiliz'd by one spring, the waters of which, tho' they cannot convert what they touch to gold, yet will dispense what gold can never purchase—Fame and Immortality. That spring is the Fountain of Genius, and of the Muses ; the Pierian Spring, which flow'd thro' ancient Greece, and cloath'd with unfading verdure, the barren plains and savage rocks of Attica. It is that sacred Fountain, at which Me-nander, and Horace, and Lucian drank, whose inspiring waters animated their fingers, and strung their lyres.

Witness

—Witness those two beautiful and unequalled compositions, in which satire has exhausted her keenest shafts; in which, the most classical purity is blended with modern urbanity; where humour sits enthron'd on a throne, in the construction of which genius has lavishly employ'd her choicest materials; and which shall preserve to distant times, the names of a Mawbey, or a Turner, sacred to immortal ridicule!—I need not say that I *can* only mean the “*Rolliad*,” and the “*Probationary Odes*.” It is however to be lamented, that future ages will not be able to taste and to comprehend, many of the most delicate and pointed allusions, from the circumstances of personality which accompany them, and which time will soon involve in obscurity and darkness. Whether regarded as productions of prose, or of poetry, they stand alone and unrivalled:

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valled : superior, perhaps, to the “ Dunciad” itself in energy, and not inferior in harmony of numbers ; abounding with all the attic salt so delicate to the taste in Horace ; severe and manly as the finest satires of Juvenal.

While, however, I yield this involuntary testimony to the matchless talents which produced the “ Rolliad,” and the “ Probationary Odes,” I must with equal impartiality, censure and condemn that daring and licentious spirit, which pervades them thro’ every page ; and which, after having demolish’d all the intermediate barriers, has laid it’s sacrilegious hand upon the Throne itself. There it should have stopp’d it’s rage, and laid it’s impoisoned arrows at the foot of Majesty. Not that I meant to depict an English Prince, as exempt from, or superior to the great tribunal of the opinions

nions of his People. He *is* amenable, he *ought* so to be, to that last and highest jurisdiction, establish'd by nature in the minds of men. Such may he ever remain!——But, because the *Monarch*, in his public and regal capacity, is accountable to his subjects, and an object of their fair disquisition—was it generous or magnanimous, to pursue the *man* thro' every walk of private retirement? Is it becoming the honest rage, and inherent dignity of satire, to hold up a Sovereign—I will not say to the ridicule, but to the contumely and derision of his own people? To pervade, and drag into open day, all the little personalities and weaknesses, inseparable from mortality, however elevated it's station? To follow him with unremitted persecution, from St. James's to Windsor, and from Windsor to Kew? With indefatigable and subtle industry, to depicture

him in every disgraceful attitude or position, from the crouded levee, to the kitchen-garden, or the grocer's shop?—It was not thus, that Junius, with the arm of genius laid his strong hand upon the Monarch, in an earlier period of his reign. He disdain'd to persecute the *man*, tho' he attack'd the *King*. He did not pursue the Imperial fugitive, from the Palatine Hill and the Palace of the Cæsars, to his obscure retreat at Tiber and at Baia. He stoop'd not to debase, or to tarnish his immortal labours, by deviating into ungenerous personalities; but having dedicated his pen to public utility, he disdain'd to convert it to private pique, or to purposes unworthy of it's dignity. The English people, liberal and impartial in their judgments, will never mistake this important and essential difference between the two productions; and tho' they may
 admit

admit their equal and unrivalled claims to admiration, as works of superior genius, will ever confer the palm of superior merit, where it is so justly demanded.

But, to return from this digression.—At the head of that great band denominated the “ Opposition,” and compos’d of so motley materials, as no longer to be reducible to any fix’d colour or form, appears Mr. Fox; and, near him, co-ordinate, but not co-equal, his once great antagonist, tho’ now his friend and fellow-labourer, Lord North.—It would be mockery to regard the Duke of Portland, however respectable and excellent in his private character, as other than the pageant of a party, round whom the chieftains assemble:—The Lord Rockingham of 1787; and distinguish’d by nearly similar endowments of heart and of understanding,
with

with that departed Marquis. If I place Mr. Fox foremost in this list, it is, that tho' inferior in nominal rank to Lord North, he is far superior to him in all those qualities, which demand, or which acquire dominion over the minds of men.

Not more liberally endow'd by Nature with the graces of external figure, or with the elegance of manner and address, than his rival Mr. Pitt, he has yet an unknown and undefcribable something, which pervades the darkness of his complexion, and sheds a sort of lustre across his Saturnine features. Whether it can be termed a smile, I will not venture to assert ; but it certainly has the effect upon the heart, which smiles are calculated to produce ; that of inspiring confidence, and exciting complacency. Descended from a Monarch, distinguish'd by this peculiar and characteristic

teristic excellence of face, he may perhaps claim an hereditary title to it. Son to a nobleman, as much mark'd out by public obloquy and accusation, whether justly or unjustly acquir'd, as Lord Chatham was by general favour and admiration, he cannot look for protection to paternal virtues, or plead the patriotism and disinterestedness of the House of Holland.

Unequall'd in the arts of attaching mankind to his person and fortunes ; steady and fervent in his friendships ; open and avow'd in his enmities ; never abandoning those, under any circumstances, to whom he is bound by political ties, he is design'd by Nature for the Chief of a party. Educated in the school of political learning, brought into the Senate before he had attain'd to manhood, and joining a long
experience

experience to the vigour of natural talents; he may be consider'd as consummate in all that detail of knowledge, only to be acquired by an early initiation into the mysteries of a democratical government. Possessing powers of eloquence, less copious and brilliant, but perhaps more solid and logical than those of Mr. Pitt, he is equally form'd to captivate, to convince, and to subdue. Skill'd either to entrench himself in almost impregnable fastnesses; or to carry the thunders of the war into the lines of the enemy, he can with the same facility imitate Scipio, or Fabius: He can adopt the Consular dignity, or the Tribunitian rage. Abandon'd in the more early stages of his life to the frenzy of play, and to all the dissipations of youth and unlimited profusion; a portion of those defects and errors accompanies his riper years, and sullies the lustre of

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of his high endowments. So far from being like his more fortunate rival, indifferent to the company, or superior to the blandishments of women, Mr. Fox does not blush to appear with the companion of his softer hours, in a phaeton in Hyde Park, or in the first rows of a crowded theatre. Convivial in his nature, and open to social pleasures, he confirms his political triumph over the mind, by his private and personal conquest of the heart. Bold and decided even to temerity in his conduct as a Minister, he is capable by turns, of aggrandizing, or of diminishing the power of the Crown; and of justifying by reasons and arguments the most plausible, the measure, of whatever nature, which he shall have seen fit to adopt.—Generous and beneficent in his disposition, placable and forgiving in his temper, his political enmities extend not beyond the

limits of a debate, or the walls of a House of Commons. Equal to his antagonist, in all the sublime talents requisite for the government of an empire: Superior to him in modern and polite knowledge; in an acquaintance with Europe, its manners, its courts, and its languages: he is his inferior only in one requisite; an opinion of his public principle, generally diffus'd among the people. When to this great and inherent defect, is super-added the unquestionable alienation of his Sovereign, both to his person and his party; we may lament, but we cannot be surpris'd, that abilities so universal and sublime are left unemployed, and are permitted "to waste their sweetness on the desert air."

From this illustrious and shining character, by an obvious and natural transition,

tion, we pass to Lord North: a nobleman, once high in the confidence of his Sovereign, and possess'd of more than ministerial power for a term of near twelve years; now a monument of departed greatness,

“ Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,

“ Fallen, from his high estate ;”

and compell'd to take shelter from oblivion and insignificance, under the protecting shield of that party, who pursued him with unrelenting violence, and hunted him at last into the toils! — Having rais'd the banner of revolt against the very Prince, whom he had so long served, and from whose bounty he had deriv'd so many advantages, it is not to that drawing room, of which he was once the ornament, that he can ever again look for an

asylum. Employment, it is indeed possible, that he may obtain ; but, confidence must be for ever extinct. Endow'd with almost all the attainments, or abilities, which can enliven society, or diffuse mirth and festivity through private life : Form'd to charm his friends, and to disarm even his enemies, by powers of humour and ridicule unequalled, he was deficient in all the sterner virtues and qualities of a Minister and a Statesman. Vigour, energy, coercion, principle—these were unhappily wanting ; and their defect entail'd on this unfortunate country, a war, in which her glory was lost, her dominions and provinces torn from her on every side, and her public credit exhausted, undermin'd and shaken to its foundation. But, let me respect the ashes of the politically dead, and tread lightly over them ! Personally and individually amiable, tho' an object of
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public censure, his private virtues yet extend some protection to his unshelter'd head, and claim, even amid the wreck of an empire, our esteem and our affection.

I shall content myself with characterizing the genius of Opposition, and marking its outline, without descending to a delineation of its less prominent features.—The eccentric, and ill regulated imagination of a Burke, unrestrain'd in its wild excesses by temper and judgment, is not calculated to add strength to that party, however it may frequently dazzle and delight by its illusive brilliancy. But, I should indeed be deficient, if I did not pay the tribute of one line, to so rare and so matchless a combination of talents, as meet in a Sheridan. There, a temperate and a winning elocution, sustain'd by classic elegance, adorn'd with dramatic and poetic images and allusions,

pointed

pointed with the keenest irony, and rising, when necessary, into the boldest animation, conspire to render him one of the most conspicuous leaders of parliamentary debate.

The year 1786 has been distinguish'd by one great and extraordinary event, the effects of which must, in all probability, extend far beyond the reigns of George the Third, or Louis the Sixteenth, and will be felt to distant times. The "Commercial Treaty," recently sign'd and interchang'd, is a vast gulph of political and commercial speculation, where the keenest and most pervasive sight cannot penetrate the darkness. Pregnant with unknown and unascertained benefits, or injuries, to this country ; and producing, in one great act, a complete revolution in the system of policy, adopted by England during several
ages

ages, it can only at present be consider'd as an experiment, to which time must affix the seal of approbation or condemnation. Too complicated and intricate in it's nature, too comprehensive and vast in it's operation, for any judgment to embrace without the imputation of temerity, it's principle, at least, appears in so "questionable a shape," that it cannot on a first view, be regarded with other sentiments than those of predilection.———To extinguish, or to diminish those illiberal prejudices, and those immortal wars, which, from the reign of Edward the Third, have devastated the two Monarchies, and alternately convulsed them: To substitute the mild interchange of commercial advantages, and reciprocal benefits: To open new and untried channels for activity, enterprize, and industry. These objects,

if

if they *can* be attained, will do equal honour to the genius of the Minister who plann'd, and to the spirit of the age which adopted them. Whether they *are* so obtained, or not, I am not so presumptuous, as to pretend to determine. But, when I see the public prints teeming with invective against the present treaty, because it bears so intimate a resemblance to the treaty of commerce signed in 1713, and which was rejected in the subsequent triumph of a rival faction, I cannot help commiserating the ignorance and credulity of a people, who can be made the dupes of so wretched an imposition. If there be any apology for the defection of that Ministry from the great alliance, which under Queen Anne, had so nearly brought Louis the Fourteenth to the last stage of destruction. If the names of Oxford and Bolingbroke can have any claim to be pronounced, without resentment and indignation,

dignation, as the authors of the peace of Utrecht ; it is from the degree of comparative merit, which they may claim with the English people, for having fabricated and obtained the Commercial Treaty. It was the compensation given by the Court of Versailles for our political honour, and national faith, sacrificed to France : It was a bribe, basely accepted by England, for the destruction of Holland, and the House of Austria, who were abandoned to their evil destiny, and to the chastisement of Villars. I call upon the names and writings of Torcy, and of Desmarets, who were then at the head of the councils and finances of the French Monarchy, to prove the justice of my assertion ! Whether Vergennes may not adopt a similar line of policy ; whether that able and artful court may not find their interest, in extending to us such unquestionable advantages of trade, as will

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induce

induce us to overlook higher and nobler objects of national consideration, may be matter for enquiry, or for caution. “*Ti-
“ meo Danaos, et dona ferentes.*” But, that a fair equality of apparent commercial benefit is meant to be allow’d us, I think will scarcely admit of any reasonable doubt.

The year 1786 has likewise been distinguish’d by the death of one of the most illustrious and extraordinary personages, who has appear’d on earth in modern ages. A Prince, like Cæsar, “*grac’d
“ with both Minervas;*” like him, “*alone and superior,*” not in rank and dignity, but in splendour of talents, and in every sublime endowment of the human mind. I need not say, that I mean the late King of Prussia, who expir’d, after a reign, immortaliz’d by the most incredible exertions

exertions of genius and vigour, during six and forty years ; and the energy of whose abilities could only be eclips'd and extinguish'd, by the separation of his mind and body. Future times, who shall look back through the medium of years upon his character and reign, will require all the testimony of concurring historical evidence, to compel their reluctant belief of the unexampled display of military prowess, and civil endowments, which he exerted, to extricate his dominions from the vast combination, by which they were surrounded. Perhaps, impartial posterity will even admit much, which may palliate, though not altogether exculpate his severities and acts of violence, committed, during the great war of 1756, in Saxony and Bohemia. Excesses, which were unquestionably more the result of situation, than of sentiment ; more produced by

necessity, than arising from character! They will recollect, that while he set fire to the suburbs of Dresden, and carried off the Saxon youth of both sexes with the savage ferocity of a Genferic, or an Attila, never more to revisit their paternal seats; he was yet, where the fatal necessities of war allowed him to consult the elegance of his genius, or the clemency of his nature, the patron of arts, and the protector of his vanquished enemies. The same monarch, who drove Augustus the Third from his hereditary dominions, and compell'd him to take refuge among his Polish subjects; yet, when master of the palace and capital of his rival, was so far from exercising the rights of conquest there, that he only modestly besought permission of the Queen of Poland, to place his chair opposite the "Notte" of Corregio, in order to admire

mire it's beauties. Magnanimous and
 exalted in his feelings, he was rais'd above
 his subjects more by dignity of talents
 than of situation. Clement and forgiv-
 ing, even where the injuries offered to
 him were of the most wounding and per-
 sonal nature, he never condescended to
 punish or resent them. Pervading with
 eager and active eye, every department of
 the State; uniting unparallel'd corporal
 activity, to equal energy of intellect, he
 extended his protection, or his punish-
 ment to every class of his subjects. Averse
 to the effusion of human blood, no scaf-
 folds streamed in Berlin, during a reign
 of near half a century. Terrible to his
 enemies in peace, from the recollection of
 his exploits in war: Courted and ad-
 mir'd throughout Europe, by its Princes,
 who contended for his friendship: Rever'd
 by his subjects, and idoliz'd by his soldiery,
 the

the companions of his victories; he at length sunk under the common lot of mortality, from which all his talents could not exempt him; leaving behind him a name, which must endure, and augment in celebrity, as long as man possesses a capacity of perpetuating, or transmitting any testimony of his own existence! —A new Prince has ascended the Prussian throne, educated in the great school of his predecessor; and towards whom it is natural, peculiarly in the present critical situation of Holland, for all Europe to turn their attentive eyes, at the opening of his reign. I shall not, however, pursue any further, the subject of German transactions, or continental politics. The short remainder of these papers will be directed to more domestic objects.

Two singular and interesting scenes occupy the principal part of this canvas, and arrest the attention. Scenes, which in all ages seem to have been acted, and by which Athens and Rome were successively disgraced ! Scenes, which recal to every classic mind the injured names of Themistocles, and of Phocion ; of Scipio, and of Camillus !

If there be a man, to whom this grateful country should erect public statues, and whom she should enroll among her tutelary deities, it is unquestionably to Lord Rodney that such honours are due. It is to him that we are indebted for one proud day, unequal'd in the British history ; the only, or almost only compensation for years of disgrace, of profusion, and of ignominy. It was with resentment and indignation, that this country beheld that illustrious

illustrious person, recall'd in the moment of his victory; that she saw another Ormond succeed another Marlborough; and that she was witness to a reluctant and *inferior* title being conferr'd on her hero and her deliverer, in the same year,—nay, *almost* in the same little month, in which two naval characters, not quite so deservedly dear to their country, were raised to *superior* dignities. Posterity will demand with natural astonishment, under what minister, so flagrant an act of national injustice and ingratitude was committed. They will hardly believe, that scarce sixty days elapsed between the elevation of Lord Howe and Lord Keppel, to the rank of Viscounts, and that of Lord Rodney to the rank of a Baron.—But, in what colours of honest indignation am I to depicture the more ungrateful treatment, which that illustrious person
 actually

actually suffers ? So far from returning to repose in the evening of his life, under the shade of those laurels, which no political lightning can ever wither : instead of meeting that affluent retirement, so justly merited by his successful labours ; what is his present situation ?—Persecuted by legal accusations : Compell'd to hold up his hand as a criminal, at the bar of that country, which he has saved and extricated. Pursued by individuals, who were leagued with America in the most flagitious of all connections, for the ruin of England. Depriv'd, by the removal of those very papers from the office of a Secretary of State, which he sent home with every precaution in order to secure their safety ; and which are indispensibly necessary to justify his own conduct, and to punish his prosecutors. Finally condemn'd by a decision of the Privy
I Council ;

Council; the inevitable consequences of which sentence not only involve the destruction of his fortune, but extend their pernicious influence to the fleet and army at large, and to every commander, employ'd to fight her battles. This is a melancholy, but a too faithful picture of the actual situation of the man, to whose high merits and services rendered his country, a garter and a Dukedom are far unequal!—But, will the people of England look tamely on, and see their Belisarius extend his laurel'd hand, and ask for bread? Are we thus fallen? Are we more vile and debased, than were the Roman people under Justinian? Shall Europe be spectators of so disgraceful a proceeding? Shall we drive our guardian and our protector, again to seek an asylum in the capital of that enemy, whom he vanquish'd and subdued? And shall he receive from the
generosity

generosity of the Court of Versailles, what he has been denied by the ingratitude of England? Forbid it, Glory! Forbid it Shame! Forbid it Manhood!—Will not the legislature itself interpose between him and poverty, and by the same act redeem Lord Rodney from distress, and his country from disgrace? Or, are we to see the law, with harpy talon, lay it's fierce gripe on the property of the saviour of the empire? Is his age to be embitter'd by suits, and attachments, and all the nameless engines of judicial torture? If this is to be the concluding scene of so illustrious a life, we may indeed exclaim

———— “ O Gloria! vincitur idem

“ Nempe, et in exilium præceps fugit, atque ibi magnus

“ Mirandusque eliens sedet ad prætoria Regis,

“ Donec Bithyno libeat vigilare tyranno.

“ Finem animæ, quæ res humanas miscuit olim,

“ Non gladii, non saxa dabunt, nec tela; sed ille

“ Cannarum vindex, ac tanti sanguinis ultor.”——

—the

—the cruel and unjust decisions of an English judicature.

Humiliating and disgraceful as is the picture which I have drawn, it is not the only one of a similar kind, which England presents at the present juncture.—Lord Rodney is not the single victim of 1786 ! Another very distinguish'd and very illustrious person has been selected by party violence, for its most inveterate attacks ; I mean, Mr. Hastings. If his services have been less brilliant and glorious than those of Lord Rodney, they have yet been attended, with the most solid and beneficial consequences. While the one extricated our affairs in the Western World from an abyss of ruin which approach'd to total extinction ; the other sustain'd the honour

nour of the English name and arms, over all Asia and the East. It was indeed in India, and in India only, that we may be said to have made any conquests during the late war, while flight, and disgrace, and retreat, accompanied our operations in every other quarter of the Globe. “ Prosperæ
 “ in Oriente, adversæ in Occidente Res.” Amidst this scene of confusion and anarchy, Mr. Hastings, from the boundless resources of his own mind, successfully oppos’d within the limits of his jurisdiction, the efforts of domestic faction, of interior rebellion, and of external hostility. While with one hand he subjected Cheit Sing, and repell’d the Mharattas; with the other, he extended assistance to Madras, and marched an army to the opposite coast of Malabar : a march, in comparison of which, the boasted retreat of the ten thousand under Xenophon cannot be produc’d in competition !

competition! To his celerity and decision we unquestionably owe the preservation of all the English dominions on the Coast of Coromandel, at that disastrous period, when Hyder Ally had spread terror and consternation to the gates of Madras, and threaten'd the extermination of the name and existence of England throughout the Carnatic.

And are these the services for which Mr. Hastings is accus'd and impeach'd? Did such important and salutary exertions merit so hard a return? Did Mr. Pitt, tho' conscious of, and bearing his own testimony to them, yet abandon and forsake him, because a degree of error, or even of misconduct and severity might mark *one* measure of his government? Is the oppression, even admitting it to be such, exercis'd against Cheit Sing, preceded and accompanied as
it

it was by the circumstances of that Prince's revolt ; to be admitted as a sufficient reason for delivering up Mr. Hastings to the insults of his enemies ? Does a single instance of mal-administration cancel a life of public labour and distinguish'd merit ? If this is to be the principle, on which every man in dangerous and elevated situations of public trust, is ultimately to be acquitted or condemn'd ; if we require of him that he

“ In one meridian brightness shine,

“ Nor e'er like evening suns, decline,”

We are, I fear, henceforward to expect none of those bold and decisive measures, which in certain circumstances are the only means left to save a sinking state : but which, as they of necessity suppose and involve a great degree of personal responsibility

bility and frequently of obloquy, will not be adopted, from an apprehension of eventual prosecution and impeachment. In the conduct of Mr. Pitt, and in his vote upon that memorable transaction, I can neither trace the liberality and expansion of a superior mind, nor the consistency and sound policy of an able Minister. The exultation and triumph, with which his enemies beheld the error that he had committed : The concern and condemnation, which many of his friends expressed and affixed to his conduct : The astonishment and incredulity, with which the intelligence of it was received at Versailles—all these opinions concur to evince, that the measure was as injudicious in its nature, as I believe it will be found pernicious in its effects. The general merit of Mr. Hastings's Administration, however particular features of it may be liable to the imputation of
error

error, is felt deeply in the Court of France, altho' it be disputed here. Whether the articles of accusation, preferred against him, will be resumed in the approaching session, or, on what principles they are to be prosecuted, I know not : But I will venture to assert, that Mr. Pitt's line of conduct, by which he seems to abandon Mr. Hastings's *character* to impeachment, while he affects to screen his *person* from the effects of parliamentary prosecution or condemnation, is, of all measures, that which will disgust every party, and meet with general disapprobation. If Mr. Hastings, on the impartial survey of his whole administration as Governor General of India, is thought to deserve punishment, let it be exemplary ! If his services are found greatly to outweigh his defects, and to have manifestly preserved and sustained the empire, let him receive that generous and grateful pro-

tection from the State, which he extended to it in the most perilous circumstances. But, “ out upon this half-faced fellowsh!p ! ” — Mr. Hastings has, however, one appeal from the candid virulence of Mr. Burke, and from the inconsistent rectitude of Mr. Pitt. There is still a tribunal in this country, superior to, and independant of a vote of the Commons, or a sentence of the Lords. It is the Tribunal of the People of England, and of Public opinion : that ultimate and awful jurisdiction, to which Junius appeal’d, and which gave more than one salutary lesson to Ministers and to Parliaments, in the commencement of the present reign ; when persecution, arm’d with all the powers of the Legislature, vainly attempted to oppress a single individual ! Before that tribunal Mr. Hastings will appear, and they will finally determine, whether he is an object of the condemnation,

nation, or of the protection and gratitude of his country.

The retreat, either actual, or imminent, of Lord Mansfield from a situation which he has held with so much dignity to himself, and so much public benefit to his country, for the period of thirty years, forms not only an epocha in the annals of the jurisprudence of England; but ought not to be pass'd over in silence, in the enumeration of those leading facts and events, which characterize the close of 1786. This great and superior person, the rare endowments of whose mind have so long and so deservedly sustained him in the seat of the chief criminal justice of England, has seen his popularity survive even the rude attacks of Junius, and bloom anew in the evening of his life. It is rather to be wish'd, I fear, than to be expected, that

his successor in that high and important situation, will leave no room to regret the secession of Lord Mansfield, and the loss of those sublime talents by which he has been ever distinguish'd.

Here I shall stop, nor attempt to delineate all the inferior features, which characterize the present æra. My intention has been to present, and to convey a general resemblance, without shading the minute parts of the picture. How far the portrait will be found faithful to Nature, I must leave to those who shall survey it. It is, at least, defac'd by no party misrepresentations, and obscur'd by no private prejudices. Above the vileness of writing for any faction, or adopting from interest, any opinions: Having little to hope, and less to apprehend from any Minister, I have written as I felt, on
every

every subject. Even on matters the most personal, I have been bias'd by no sinister views, or motives. " Mihi Galba, Otho, " Vitellius, nec beneficio, nec injuria " cogniti." I am neither to be found on the terrace at Windsor, nor at the suppers of Carlton House. I have neither bow'd to the Meridian, nor to the Rising Sun. I have neither flatter'd the Minister, where I conceive that he is an object of censure; nor justified the Opposition in those acts where I believe them to have merited condemnation. Perhaps at a time like the present, this impartiality may be found to have few recommendations, in a country and a capital, where party pervades every class and description of mankind. But, if these sheets, by any fortuitous and improbable accident, shall float upon the surface of that political stream, which rolls down the events of the reign

reign of George the Third : If by some unmerited preservation, they should escape the destiny of a vulgar pamphlet, futurity will appreciate that impartiality, and regard it with more favourable eyes. Could I go farther, and indulge the absurd supposition, that my own cotemporaries, the inhabitants of this country and capital should receive with favour the present production, it may induce and incite me, in some moment of leisure, to resume my pen, and to attempt to complete that picture, of which I have here only trac'd the outline.

F I N I S.







